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St James

(A  
Dissertation  
on  
Cholera Morbus)

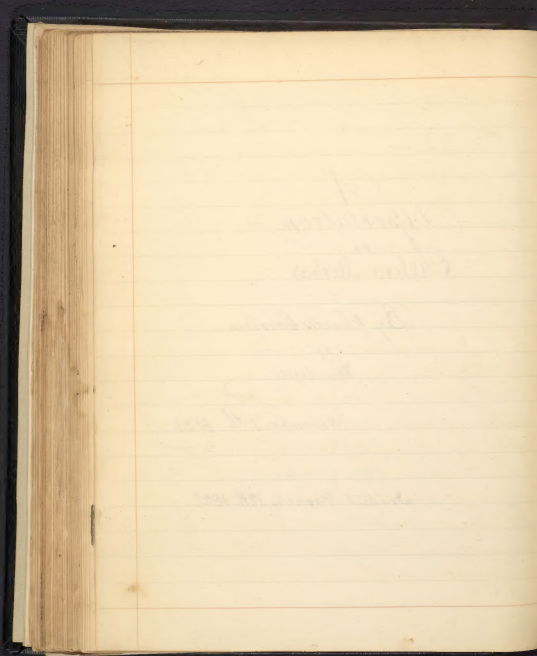
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## Cholera Morbus

Cholera is derived from the Greek words  
χολη bile and, πορ a flux.

It has been called, diarrhoea cholericæ;  
fœtiffuus passio and, by some of the ancients  
holera. Dr Rush calls it "the intestinal state of  
fever." Others have thought it the Billious fever  
of the season turned in upon the bowels: & this  
I think quite probable as it frequently appears  
at the same season and is cured by remedies of  
the same description. This disease is placed by Cullen



in claps, neurges and other spasmi.

Dr. Chapman places it among the diseases of the digestive system.

The stomach is one of the most important organs of the human body. Situated in the very center of the system it rules, as it were with an iron scepter; no part of our frame is exempt from its influence, the liver, the uterus, and the brain in particular, are very closely connected with it. Many of the diseases, which the ancients supposed to originate in other parts, we now believe to have their origin in the stomach; as, gout, hysteria &c.

It was formerly supposed that Cholera Morbus originated in the Liver, and that the disease depended on an increased secretion of bile of a nature more acrid than usual, thus producing the violent commotions of the stomach and intestines which take place in this disease, but I believe it is generally conceived, that Cholera Morbus is primarily of gastric origin & that the augmented



secretion of bile follows in consequence of the sympathy existing between the stomach and hepatic system. Our reasons for believing this disease to originate in the stomach are,

1<sup>st</sup> Because the evacuations at the commencement of this disease are merely the contents of the stomach, and that bilious discharges do not take place until the liver becomes sympathetically affected

2<sup>nd</sup> Cholera Morbus proceeds from the same causes which produce other diseases of the stomach, as acrid poisons, low living, unripe fruits, debauchery, and cold applied either to the extremities or surface,

3<sup>rd</sup> The remedies most successful in treating this disease are those we find most useful in treating other gastric affections.

Nor is it probable that the acrimony of the bile is any greater in this, than in any other disease, as it is discharged before it has time to acquire any



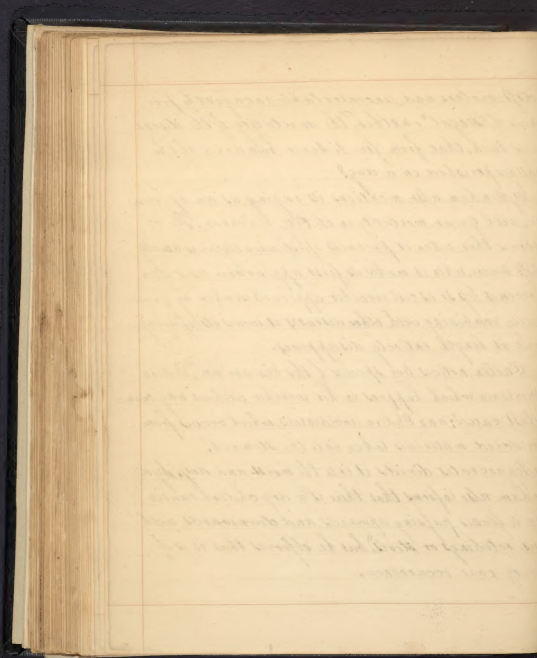


most violent and uncontrollable ravaged the provinces of Bengal and that the mortality of the disease was such, that from five to seven hundred of the natives perished in a day.

Sydenham also mentions its raging as an epidemic, with great mortality in the City of London. He observes that when it prevails epidemically, it is usually most severe, when it makes its first appearance and often becomes less as cool weather approaches, when by gradually combining with other diseases, it wears itself away and at length entirely disappears.

Cullen notices two species of this disease viz, "Cholera spontanea which happens in hot weather without any manifest cause"; and Cholera accidentalis, which occurs from too acrid materials taken into the stomach.

Hippocrates divides it into the moist and dry, Sydenham also informs that there is a dry cholera caused by a flatus passing upwards and downwards without retchings or stools, but he observes that it is of very rare occurrence.



Cholera Morbus often attacks Sadoacs, and commonly commences with the following

Symptoms are

Nausea, pain, flatulency and distention of the abdomen. These symptoms are soon followed by an immediate vomiting and purgation. At first the discharges consist merely of the contents of the stomach and intestines, but a few hours elapse and the more purulent discharges. At this period there is general, severe, crampy and spasms of the intestines, the pain is frequent and sometimes small and unequal, accompanied with great heat of the skin, thirst and hurried respiration. In the more moderate forms of this disease, these symptoms last only for a day or two gradually subsiding leaving the patient in an exhausted and almost insensible state. But this is rarely the case, as this is probably the disease with which we are acquainted, and the use of medicine is more extensively required than in the case now under consideration. It is one which should never be trusted to the care of nature. If the symptoms above described do not subside in the course of a few hours;



the pain and griping become more severe, the spasms are com-  
municated to the abdominal muscles and thighs; the system  
appears weak, is accompanied with cold clammy sweat  
or at times, cramps in the legs and arms, and coldness of  
the extremities, with Sticcups, fainting and a sinking pul-  
sation, which will generally terminate the life of the pa-  
tient some times in the course of twenty four hours; and in  
some more violent cases in three or four hours. It has been ob-  
served by Sydenham, Hall and others, that when the dis-  
charge is purulent, change to a colourless fluid, resembling urine  
in appearance very much the water in which crabs dish-  
ed has been washed, that the patient very seldom or ne-  
ver recovers. This disease as was before stated generally  
commences with vomiting, but in some cases the purging  
precedes the vomiting. In the more severe forms of the dis-  
ease most generally, when it prevails epidemically, the  
spasms not only affect the abdominal muscles, but also  
possess every other part of the system. This was the case  
when it prevailed at Carcass. Sydenham also in speaking  
of the Exanthemes in France of 1679 1680 says that not



only the abdominal muscles but also all the muscles of the legs  
especially those of the arms and legs were affected with such  
terrible spasms, as that the patient would sometimes beat one  
of his arms with the hand of the other arm in order if  
possible to mitigate their violence. Cullen says that the ab-  
dominal blood vessels are seldom affected with much persis-  
tence though in the course of it both the pulse and res-  
piration are hurried and irregular yet these symptoms  
are soon entirely removed by the remaining that quiet the  
spasmodic actions peculiar to the disease as to treat-  
ment I cannot but suppose it attended with one proper  
premeditation. The stools in this disease are generally at  
first of a yellowish colour; but after a few evacuations  
they change to a greenish and after at last to a dark  
or blackish colour.

Great heat or a warm sultry atmosphere  
has very properly been supposed to have a considerable  
share in predisposing to this disease, but I do not know  
that it has any particular effect in this way different  
from other debilitating causes. Great predisposition to





acid properties; some even affirm that it is more  
bland than is health.

This disease generally makes its appearance  
in warm sunny weather. It's frequently in August  
Sydenham says it only prevails in August seldom  
making its first attack in September. But this I think  
incorrect at least as far as we are now concerned.

I have had two violent attacks of this disease myself,  
one in June & the other in December of 1816. I've both  
run on without me being able to discern any cause  
and after continuing about 10 or 12 days, have  
run me in an extremely weak and debilitated state.

I have also seen one or two cases, during the warm  
weather in the breaking up of winter.

Cholera Morbus Sometimes prevails endemically.

It also frequently prevails as an Epidemic, particu-  
larly in warm climates. Dr. Thomas Sturt, in his  
remarks, on the cholera morbus of Calcutta published  
in the Indian Medical Recorder, informs us that  
"During the years 1817, & 1818 a species of cholera the



body to the action of stimuli and may thus be considered  
a cause of Cholera Morbus. When the body greatly de-  
-viated from its proper position in warm weather issued  
daily exposed to a transient cold air, it was highly sus-  
ceptible to the action of stimuli.

The Cause, which was more immediately in producing  
this disease, was,

1<sup>st</sup> Intemperance in food - as the immediate cause of the  
disease, Dr. Chapman is Lecturing on this disease, it  
forms a case which arose from eating unwholesome  
at noon, and all that medicine was able to do, could not  
prevent a fatal issue before night.

2<sup>nd</sup> Acrid poisons taken into the stomach. Dr. E. Clark  
my preceptor had a violent attack of Cholera Morbus last  
summer produced by eating a single seed of the Palma  
Christi; it continued to vomit and purge him for near  
twenty hours.

3<sup>rd</sup> Cold applied either to the surface or internally.

4<sup>th</sup> Suppressed perspiration.

5<sup>th</sup> Marsh Miasma.

6<sup>th</sup> Intemperate living and debauchery & also intempe-



paroxysms of passion.

7th. Over distention of the stomach, by taking food in too large quantities at a time. This I believe is the generally the cause of the disease. Dr Hall in speaking of the cholera mortis at Calcutta informs us that the natives use large quantities of rice, consuming almost incredible quantities at a time; and that they are commonly attacked with the disease after eating a very large dinner. Whether this action is one hastened on by a preternatural distension is more than I am able to determine. Dr Hall thinks not. I have a brother who cannot eat more than six or seven spoonfuls of this article without producing this disease. It has since collected him thus from his earliest infancy.

If a debilitated one consequently gets used to taking such a large quantity the action of stimulus to form the disease under consideration, and this may arise from this being a habit, or more immediately a passion. As was before observed there is probably no disease with which we are more connected in which the operation of a passion is more essentially concerned than in the one we are now considering.

*Isidoreus pacificus*

more. It is a disease which is cured, not it is its ac-  
-tion and the remedies proper are active remedies, the  
first being a rather violent one. Symptoms not generally  
more distressing, is not our medical men to adopt the ha-  
mon from a view to immediate relief by the resolution of pro-  
prio-act in medicine, that it is sometimes necessary to  
administer anodynes before evacuations. I think there is no  
doubt; but as the disease generally presents itself, I think  
this practice incorrect, still although it may momen-  
tarily quiet the insidious enemy it is only calculated  
to prolong the complaint until she can gain new  
vigour to pursue the attack with greater violence.

Having promised these explanations I shall proceed to  
the most important part under consideration viz.

### The Treatment.

Called in the commencement of this disease the two prin-  
cipal indications to be attended to are

1<sup>st</sup> To evacuate the contents of the stomach; and thus throw  
out the offending matter.

2<sup>d</sup> To calm the irritation; check the spasms; and over-





from the prostatic action of the Stomach.

It was the practice for many years past to commence the treatment of this disease by administering large draughts of diluent drinks, such as, Rice gruel, Barley water, Linseed Oil, boiled down as diffusible throat hot water & brandy, &c. These all answer this purpose very well, but in order to produce the desired effect, they must be taken warm and in large quantities at a time. Warm enemas of the same or different kinds are also frequently to be thrown up. Sydenham directs that "it should be boiled in three parts of water, & that large draughts of this be taken when warm; and also, that at the same time large quantities of this fluid be thrown up in injections until the whole be taken or the desired effects obtained." But as Dr. Chapman is of opinion that the practice may fail, as it was wont to do at a late period, concluding that it was the acridity of the humor which caused the disease, then treated it, as a poison and washed it out with copious drinks. Dr. Chapman in his lectures on this disease recommends

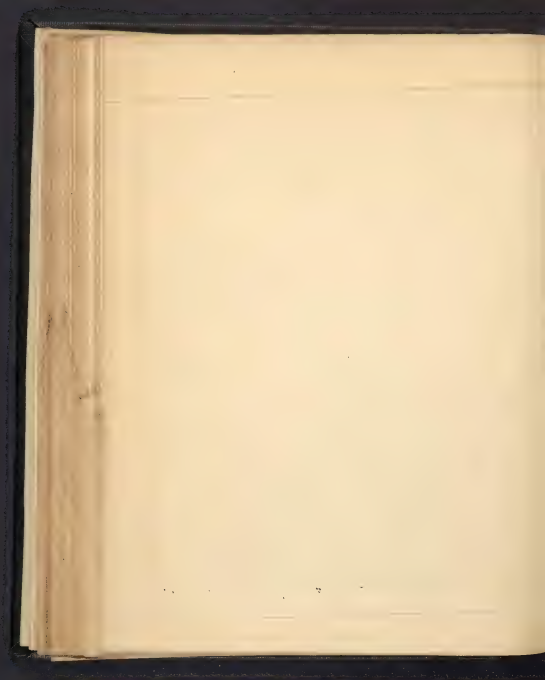


when evacuations are required, that we should give  
Emetics instead of depleting the stomach with warm  
drinks and of this the best is Spicamen, it is to be given  
in doses of 15 or 20 grains followed by the ordinary  
drinks to promote its operation.

I had an opportunity during the last summer of wit-  
nessing in several instances the good effects of this plan  
of treatment, I think it in most cases equally safe & much  
more quick and efficacious in its action than the former  
method.

This being then the most indication is to check  
the violent commotions, &c

To fulfill this indication various remedies have  
been employed but the best is the Tartar. This is to  
be used more or less freely according to the state of the  
system. Dr. Chapman tells us that the pulse here must  
not be our only guide no matter how feeble it may be  
yet if the patient be possessed of ordinary vigour the  
Tartar must be used to some extent. But he goes on  
to caution us against the too free use of it in some par-



ticular conditions of the system where either from the system refusing to react or from the blood vessels being in a great measure empty by a determination to the great viscera it might happen that a sudden & copious retraction would be highly injurious & greatly endanger the life of the patient. We should therefore view blood strictly carefully watching the vessels & promoting and regulate the quantity accordingly.

The Warm Bath is a very useful and important remedy in all doubtful cases of cancer where the spasmodic affections of the intestines are very severe it will be found, advisable to precede the use of the Cancer by the application of the warm bath. In such cases the inducing a sudden relaxation of the system as well as promoting a perspiration, contributes very much to the relief of the patient.

Opium has by the common consent of practitioners of all ages been one of the principal remedies in the treatment of this disease; but in general the irritability of the stomach is such that it is impossible to make



the patient retain it: and it should therefore be given in the form of an enema; this may be repeated every three or four hours according to circumstances,

When opium is given by the mouth it should be in the solid form and in doses of half a grain every half dozen, or hour.

Cataplasms of opium and camphor applied to the region of the stomach are said, sometimes to prove beneficial.

Warmomentations to the Epigastric region are always very useful, to relieve the pain and allay the irritation of the stomach; the best of these is the bag of cloves.

Fumigations in warm spirits or brandy applied to the abdomen are always very agreeable to the patient, and frequently afford immediate relief; by using this application frequently and as warm as it can be borne permanent advantage is sometimes obtained. (Of a careful and judicious application of the remedies already mentioned, I believe that the disease, if taken in its com-





menstruation generally may be arrested in its progress and made to yield to our remedies. But should it still continue, we must not yet be discouraged, the opium may be given in larger doses and in shorter intervals.

A large Blister applied over the region of the stomach will sometimes stop the vomiting when all other means have failed.

Some water-milk also frequently answers this purpose very well, it may be taken in doses of a table spoonfull and repeated at short intervals.

It is said that the West Indian practitioners, use large doses of diluted sulphuric acid, to calm the irritation of the stomach and that it sometimes fulfils this indication even better than opium.

Rice Acid diluted, and in small doses is occasionally made use of for the same purpose.

If the patient be very much exhausted, and a tendency to sink manifested, Blisters or Sinapisms should be applied, to the extremities and the spirits of Turpentine taken internally. There is probably no disease

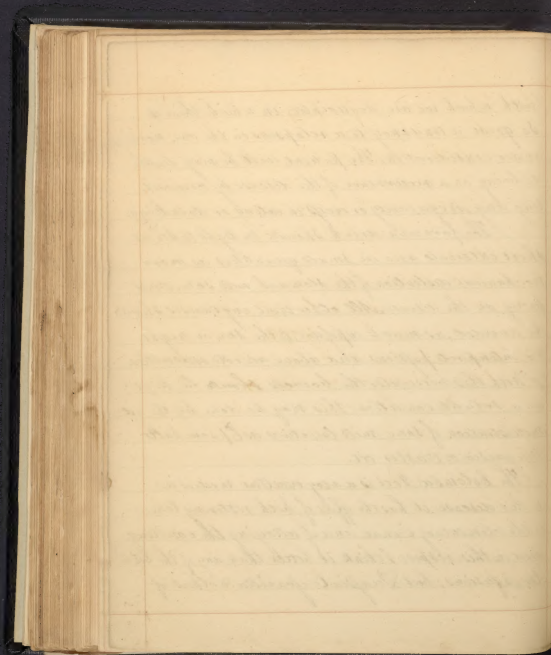


with which we are acquainted, in which there is  
so great a tendency to a relapse as in the one now  
under consideration. The patient will be very liable  
to bring on a recurrence of the disease by commit-  
ting any irregularity or excess in eating or drinking.

The food and drink should be light taken at  
short intervals and in small quantities as more  
mechanical distention of the stomach will sometimes  
bring on the disease. All other exciting causes should  
be avoided, as much exposure to the sun or night  
air intemperate passions and above all cold extremities.

With this view also the bowels should be kept  
in a soluble condition this may be done by the ad-  
ministration of some mild laxatives as Epsom salt  
Magnesia or Castor oil.

The Colomba Root is a very excellent medicine  
in this disease it has the effect of both restoring tone  
to the alimentary canal and of allaying the vomiting  
and in this respect I think it better than any of the bit-  
ter infusions; but Quassia Cascarilla & others of



this cloth also answer this purpose very well.

After the vomiting and purging have abated, a flannel roller passed comfortably tight round the abdomen is found very useful and agreeable to the patient.

Flannel worn next the skin is a remedy that is never to be overlooked in the prophylactic plan of treatment in this disease.

The great prostration of strength that early takes place in this disease is often accompanied with much anxiety of mind, depression of spirits, and an abandonment of the hopes of recovery. To remove these fears as far as possible should require our constant attention. We must here act in the double capacity of physician and friend. And here it is that the feelings of humanity should in a particular manner be roused into sympathy.

